Minutes of the meeting of
The Commission of Fine Arts
Washington, D.C.
6 October 1955

The Commission of Fine Arts met pursuant to notice at 9:30 a.m. with Mr. David E. Finley, Chairman, presiding.

Present were: David E. Finley
Elbert Peets
Felix de Weldon
Mrs. Emily Muir
Douglas W. Orr

L.R. Wilson, Secretary

Procurement of Art and Artists for Government Projects.

Mr. Peter Strobel, Commissioner, Public Buildings Service, Mr. L.L. Hunter, Supervising Architect, Design Branch, General Services Administration, and Mr. Emlen Etting, President of Artists Equity Association, met with the Commission to discuss the problems involved in commissioning art and artists for government projects. Mr. Etting stated that Artists Equity Association is desirous of taking steps to get more artists employed for the decoration of government buildings. The members of the Commission and the Commissioner of Public Buildings agreed that it would be desirable to do so. The principal handicap being lack of funds for this use, it was agreed that the surest way to overcome it would be to have legislation enacted designating a percentage of the appropriations for each Federal building for use in Commissioning paintings, murals and sculpture for the building. A recommendation was made that the Commission of Fine Arts and the General Services Administration pursue the matter and work together on drafting legislation, which would provide such a fund for the decoration of public buildings, under the joint administration of the Commission of Fine Arts and the General Services Administration.

Draft of a New Executive Order

In view of a growing tendency on the part of some Federal and District officials to fail to bring building projects, coins, etc., to the Commission of Fine Arts for advice, or to ignore the advice given, the members reviewed the authority of the Commission and discussed the idea of preparing a draft for a new Executive Order. They decided that such a draft should combine all the elements of the enabling Act and Executive Orders, but should also be written so as to strengthen the Commission's prestige. The Secretary was asked to confer with the Solicitor for the Department of the Interior with a view to preparing a draft of a new Executive Order, for review at a later meeting. Exhibit A.

Changes in Design of Lighting-Standards for Streets in the District of Columbia

The members again inspected the installation of the sample lighting standards on 14th Street, N. W., south of the District Building. Comments on the design of the standards were prepared for the Director of the District Highway Department. In general, the members thought the form of the standards on the roadway to the south of the Washington Monument was more satisfactory than the form of those installed in front of the Department of Commerce. Regret was expressed that the existing standards could not be adapted to new requirements. The members indicated their willingness to continue the discussion of the matter at a future meeting, because they considered any change in the design of the lighting standards for the City of Washington very important for the appearance of the city. Exhibit B.

Letter from Congressman Thompson on H.R. 4507 - 84th Congress a bill "To amend the joint resolution of May 17, 1938, to provide for the construction and maintenance of a National Collection of Fine Arts Museum on the site set aside for an art gallery thereunder, and for other purposes."

The Chairman called attention to a letter which he had received from Congressman Frank Thompson, jr., regarding the above legislation. The members recalled that a report had been sent, with the approval of the Bureau of the Budget, to the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Works, recommending that the bill be enacted. Further action was deemed unnecessary. Exhibits C, C-1, C-2, C-3.

Redevelopment Land Agency-Proposed Redevelopment Area for George Washington University.

The Secretary explained that the Executive Director of the Redevelopment Land Agency had advised him that a proposal was being studied to establish authority over the area now occupied by the George Washington University, in order that the area could be developed for the University as part of the Urban Renewal Program. He inquired whether the present architect (Faulkner, Kingsbury and Stenhouse) of the University was considered to have, in the opinion of the Commission, sufficient experience in site planning to warrant being retained by the Redevelopment Land Agency for the work. If not, he had asked whether the Commission of Fine Arts could furnish a list of names from which to choose an architect considered qualified. The members agreed that there was no reason not to retain the services of the present architect and recommended that a site planner be associated for the work. The Secretary was instructed to telephone this recommendation to the Director of the Redevelopment Land Agency.

Excessive subdivision of lots in Georgetown

The Secretary reported that the Progressive Citizens Association of Georgetown was becoming very disturbed about the tendency of real estate exploiters to come into Georgetown, and after buying up

larger parcels of land, subdividing it to build many small row houses. The Association had expressed its views on zoning to the Engineer Commissioner, who listened to their idea, and suggested that a proposal be made to the Zoning Board to except Georgetown from the minimum standards. This proposal was accordingly made before a preliminary zoning subcommittee and was scheduled for hearing before the Zoning Board. There followed a discussion of the zoning regulations, and the Commission doubted its authority to take any official position in the matter. The Secretary was instructed to follow the proceedings.

Informal Shipstead-Luce and Georgetown Submissions

a. Proposed store at 605-609 15th Street, N.W.-Preliminary Shipstead-Luce Application.

Mr. Edwin Weihe, architect, showed the members two alternate schemes for the facade of a one story building for Ballantyne's Book Store at the above address. The members indicated that the design of either scheme would be acceptable, if limestone is used as facing.

b. Proposed Office Building at 35th Street and St. Mary's Place, NW Preliminary Old Georgetown Application

The Secretary advised the members that Deigert & Yerkes, Architects, had decided to abandon plans to build a small office building for its own use at the above address. Mr. Yerkes did not desire to change his contemporary design to comply with Public Law 808, 81st Congress. The Georgetown Board of Architectural Consultants had previously disapproved it and recommended restudy.

Meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

L.R. Wilson, Secretary

25 October 1955

Memorandum for the Solicitor:

The latest Executive Order clarifying the duties of the Commission of Fine Arts was issued by President Harding in 1921. The present members believe it should be brought up to date, and a new order issued.

At the last meeting they asked me to take steps to prepare the draft of an Executive Order which would interpret the duties of the Commission in the light of many of the problems that are arising today, and to have it include such items as postage stamps, bridges, highway interchanges, street lights, etc.

The Commission has no legal counsel and none of the members is experienced in these matters, so that I am forced to call upon outside assistance in the preparation of such a document. I would be most grateful for any help you can render me in this task.

L. R. Wilson
Secretary

Exhibit A

20 October 1955

Dear Mr. Robertson:

During the course of a meeting on 7 September 1955, the members of the Commission of Fine Arts were happy for the opportunity to inspect the sample light poles which the District of Columbia Highway Department had erected along the east side of Fourteenth Street, south of the District Building. They inspected the poles again during the meeting on 6 October 1955, and after careful study, the members asked me to send you the following comments:

BASE: The base should be as low and inconspicuous as possible. The four nob-shaped covers (used to give access to the anchor bolts) should be kept as simple as possible, and the molded ornamentation on these covers should be omitted.

POLE: The height of the pole is acceptable. In design, the fluted or octagonal cross-section is preferred to the round plain section. In material, steel and aluminum are equally acceptable, but it is understood that aluminum discolors in time.

LUMINAIRE BRACKET: The curved form of this feature is not, in their opinion, an effective design for urban use. The shape has no relation to that of the pole, and the curve tends to attract undue attention to itself. A straight horizontal bracket would be more harmonious with the vertical and horizontal lines that prevail in the city streets.

LUMINAIRE: The shiny outer surface of the upper part of the lamp is a distracting element in the design.

The curved brace should be omitted if it is not structurally necessary. If necessary, the ends of the brace should lie flat, without the little upward curve that is used in the standards we inspected. The brace, if used, should have a well-rounded curve and the point at which it is fixed to the bracket, measured from the pole, should be about two-thirds of the length of the bracket.

On the whole, the members felt that the light standards on the roadways to the south of the Washington Monument were more satisfactory in design than the samples set up opposite the Commerce Department Building.

Exhibit B

If you wish to prepare a modified design, the Commission will be glad to discuss the matter with you at your convenience. The members consider the design of the lighting standards a matter of the utmost importance to the appearance of the City of Washington.

Sincerely yours,

L. R. Wilson
Secretary

Mr. J. N. Robertson
Director of Highways
Department of Highways
District Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Exhibit B

NK THOMPSON, JR.
D STRICT, NEW JERSEY

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

September 21, 1955

Honorable David E. Finley
Chairman
Commission of Fine Arts
Interior Department Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Chairman Finley:

In the Washington Evening Star of September 16, it was reported that only two crucial matters remain up in the air in regard to the Southwest Redevelopment Program 1) the precise location of the National Air Museum and 2) the matter of financing.

The Washington Star of September 18th carried an interview with Robert W. Dowling, Chairman of the Board of the American National Theater and Academy. Mr. Dowling is reported as saying that as far as he was concerned "the site is an open question." A number of factors leads me to believe that the site is an important, perhaps crucial matter. It will be recalled, for instance, that on September 21, 1954, the Republican Majority of a House Education and Labor Subcommittee in a published Report on some 14 bills on which hearings had been held declared:

> "We also view with considerable skepticism the suggestion that building a national memorial theater will prompt private investors to redevelop Southwest Washington. Desirable as this redevelopment objective may be, we do not believe that Federal funds should be spent to build a theater in the hope that private funds will then rebuild the town around it. If the order of these building projects were reversed, we might be inclined to look more favorably on this suggestion for a national memorial theater."

A copy of my bill, H. R. 4307, is enclosed for consideration and comment by the Commission of Fine Arts. Officials of the Smithsonian Institution sent me a report on this measure under date of September 6, 1955, a copy of which is enclosed for your information and consideration by the Commission Members. You will note that the suggestion is made that the auditorium should be located on "the land lying to the south of Independence Avenue between 7th and 9th Streets, Southwest."

While attending and participating in the Second All-Student Conference on the Place and Future of the Creative Arts Today at Columbia University early this year I came across the very interesting plans for a 10-story art center building on the Morningside Campus. Facilities are planned for

COPY

Exhibit C

FRANK THOMPSON, JR.
NEW JERSEY

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D. C.

September 21, 1954

Honorable David K. Finley
Chairman
Commission of Fine Arts
Interior Department Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Chairman Finley:

In the Washington Evening Star of September 14, it was reported that only two crucial matters remain up in the air in regard to the Southwest Redevelopment Program 1) the precise location of the National Air Museum and 2) the matter of financing.

The Washington Star of September 16th carried an interview with Robert W. Dowling, Chairman of the Board of the American National Theater and Academy. Mr. Dowling in reported as saying that as far as he was concerned "the site is an open question." I member of Fredrick Leeds we to believe that the site is no longer serious, perious crucial matter. It will be recalled, for instance, that on September 21, 1953, the Republican Majority of a House Subcommittee had taken definite decisions in a so-called Report on some 11 sites on which hearings had been held declared:

"We also view with considerable skepticism the suggestion that building a national memorial theater will exempt private interests to renovate Southwest Washington. Undoubtedly as this redevelopment objective may be, we do not believe that Federal funds should be spent to build a theater in the hope that private funds will then rebuild the town around it. If the owner of these buildings [illegible] desired, he might be inclined to [illegible] more favorably on this suggestion for a national memorial theater."

A copy of my bill, H. R. 6317, is enclosed for consideration and comment by the Commission of Fine Arts. Section 2a of the authorizing legislation ment me a report on this measure under date of September 5, 1953, a copy of which is enclosed for your information and consideration by the Commission Members. You will note that the suggestion is made that the auditorium should be located on "the land lying to the south of Independence Avenue between 7th and 9th Streets, Southwest."

While attending and participating in the Second All-American Conference on the Place and Future of the Creative Arts Today at Columbia University early this year I came across the very interesting plans for a [illegible] center building on the Pennsylvania Campus. Facilities are planned for

Exhibit C

teaching, experiment, practice, and research in architecture, the dramatic arts, television, radio, motion pictures, painting, sculpture, music, archeology and the history of art.

You are, of course, very familiar with this project inasmuch as you delivered the major address -- "A Bridge for the Arts" -- at a luncheon given by the Columbia Associates of Columbia University at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City on May 24, 1955, when the public announcement of plans for the Art Center was made.

Art center buildings combining all of the arts is a bold, new, and largely American concept and such buildings are being established in many communities across our country. The art museums and galleries in our country have become, increasingly in recent years, true art centers in many communities in order to better serve the needs of the people. Music is one of the major activities of the National Gallery of Art. American music has been greatly supported and encouraged and American musicians and composers have been honored by these music activities of the National Gallery of Art. I have often thought, and so have many of my friends, that if the auditorium facilities for the presentation of music and the theater arts had been carefully considered by the donor, Andrew Mellon, that is, if music had been made an integral part of the gallery's program from the beginning rather than added as an afterthought when the National Gallery had been built for several years music as well as our national life would be much richer and better off at this point in our cultural growth and development.

Recently, also, the Rockefeller Foundation made a grant of money to one of our leading art museums to finance a study of the best ways in which art galleries and museums could serve all the arts and become true art centers.

It is my considered opinion, therefore, that the inclusion of facilities for the presentation of music and the living arts of drama, opera, ballet in the National Collection of Fine Arts Museum as proposed in H. R. 4307 is a logical and necessary step. Such an art center in the Nation's Capital could be the archetype which would hasten the establishment of similar centers thoughout the country. No greater contribution could be made, I believe, to our country's growth and development than by establishing in the Federal City a prototype art center. Such an art center would unquestionably make a greater contribution to our country's cultural growth than an art gallery or museum given over solely to the plastic and graphic arts as is the custom in Europe. Now that our leading art museums and galleries are breaking away from the European tradition in this matter, this is clearly not the time to establish an art gallery or an opera house closely modelled after similar structures on the Continent which have been the hallmarks of European culture for centuries.

Cordially,

Frank Thompson, Jr., M. C.

Enclosures

teaching, experiment, practice, and research in architecture, the fine arts, painting, radio, motion picture, acting, sculpture, music, archaeology and the history of art.

You are, of course, very familiar with this project inasmuch as you delivered the major address -- "A Design for the Arts" -- at a luncheon given by the Columbia Associates of Columbia University at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City on May 19, 1939, when the public announcement of plans for the Arts Center was made.

Arts center buildings combining all of the arts in a unit, new, and largely American conceived and even buildings are being established in many communities across our country. The arts museum and galleries in our country have become, increasingly in recent years, true art centers in many communities in order to better serve the needs of the people. Music is one of the major activities of the National Library of Art. American music has been greatly supported and encouraged and American musicians and composers have been honored by these music activities of the National Gallery of Art. I have often thought, and so have many of my friends, that if the auditorium facilities for the presentation of music and the theater arts had been naturally connected by the donor, Andrew Mellon, that it would have been much an integral part of the gallery's program from the beginning rather than added as an afterthought when the National Gallery had been built for several years music as well as our national life would be much richer and better off at this point in our cultural growth and development.

Recently, also, the Metropolitan Museum made a point of money in one of my leading art museums to finance a study of the most modern in which arts and museums could serve all the arts and become true art centers.

[illegible] in my previous meeting, therefore, that the depression facilities for the presentation of music and the living arts of today, which [illegible] in the Mellon Collection of Works of Fine Arts to the U. S. [illegible] a logical and necessary step. Such an act would be the [illegible] capital as the enterprise which would bring the establishment of which [illegible] the country. It provide unquestionably [illegible] and development than by establishing in the Federal City a [illegible] art center. Such an act should materially add a greater contribution to our country's cultural growth than an art gallery or many times over solely to the people and to the nation to future. The that our leading art museums and galleries are [illegible] from the American tradition in that sense, with is clearly out the idea to establish an art gallery or an opera house directly and [illegible] similar structure on the Continent which have been the main-stays of European culture for centuries.

Sincerely,

Frank Lloyd Wright

Frank Lloyd Wright, Esq., D. C.

From the Washington Office
of Congressman Thompson

84TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4307

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 23, 1955

MR. THOMPSON of New Jersey introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Public Works

A BILL

To amend the joint resolution of May 17, 1938, to provide for the construction and maintenance of a National Collection of Fine Arts Museum on the site set aside for an art gallery thereunder, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That section 2 of the joint resolution entitled "Joint resolution to set apart public ground for the Smithsonian Gallery of Art, and for other purposes", approved May 17, 1938, is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 2. (a) The Regents of the Smithsonian Institution (hereinafter referred to as the 'Regents'), in consultation with the Administrator of General Services, are hereby

C-1

authorized to appoint an architect or architects and other necessary experts and consultants, and to secure appropriate designs for a building to be constructed on the site above described. Such building shall include auditoriums (with mass communication facilities) for the presentation of music and the theater arts, and shall be designed so as to permit its future expansion, with adequate parking arrangements and provision for landscaping its surroundings.

"(b) In carrying out subsection (a), the Regents are authorized to utilize the assistance and advice of the Commission of Fine Arts, the National Capital Planning Commission, the National Capital Regional Planning Council, the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia, the District of Columbia Recreation Board, and the District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency, which shall upon request render such assistance and advice.

"(c) (1) There is hereby created an advisory board, which shall advise and consult with the Regents in carrying out their functions under subsection (a). The advisory board shall consist of—

"(A) one person selected by each of the following national organizations in the field of State and local government and civic affairs: The Council of State Governments, the American Society of Planning Officials, the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment

Officials, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Society of Landscape Architects;

"(B) one person selected by each of the following women's national organizations: The General Federation of Women's Clubs, the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee, the Association of Junior Leagues of America, the Women's Division of the Republican National Committee, and the American Association of University Women;

"(C) one person selected by each of the following national organizations in the field of education: The National Congress of Parents and Teachers, the National Education Association, the American Council on Education, the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Educational Theatre Association, the Music Educators National Conference, the National Art Education Association, the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, the College Art Association, the American Musicological Society, the Association of American Colleges, the American Political Science Association, and the American Federation of Teachers;

"(D) one person selected by each of the following national organizations in the field of the plastic arts and letters: The Committee on Government and Art, the American Institute of Architects, the National In-

stitute of Arts and Letters, the American Federation of Arts, the National League of American Pen Women, the National Society of Arts and Letters, the American Association of Museums, the American Institute of Decorators, the Association of Art Museum Directors, the National Association of Women Artists, the Sculptors Guild, the National Society of Mural Painters, and the Society of Architectural Historians;

"(E) one person selected by each of the following national music organizations: The National Music Council, the National Federation of Music Clubs, the American Symphony Orchestra League, the Music Teachers National Association, the American Federation of Musicians, the American Guild of Organists, the American Guild of Musical Artists, the National Association of Schools of Music, the Music Library Association, the National Association of Teachers of Singing, the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers, the Music Publishers' Association of the United States, Broadcast Music, Incorporated, and SESAC, Incorporated;

"(F) one person selected by each of the following national organizations in the field of drama: The National Association of Community Theaters, the National Theater Conference, the Children's Theater Conference,

the American National Theater and Academy, the Actors Equity Association, and the Chorus Equity Association;

"(G) one person selected by each of the following national organizations in the field of mass communications: The Motion Picture Association of America, Incorporated, the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters, the Film Council of America, and the National Citizens Committee for Educational Television;

"(H) one person selected by each of the following national organizations in the field of recreation and sports: The American Recreation Society and the National Recreation Association; and

"(I) one person selected by each of the following national service organizations: The United Service Organizations (USO), the Young Women's Christian Association, the National Jewish Welfare Board, the National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the American Association of Social Workers, the Community Chests and Councils of America, Incorporated, and the National Social Welfare Assembly.

"(2) The advisory board may exercise its functions through a working committee composed of eighteen mem-

bers, two selected jointly by the organizations named in each of the categories enumerated in paragraph (1)."

SEC. 2. (a) Section 3 (b) of such joint resolution is amended by striking out "Director of Procurement, Treasury Department," and inserting in lieu thereof "Administrator of General Services".

(b) Section 3 (c) of such joint resolution is amended to read as follows:

"(c) The name of the building shall be the National Collection of Fine Arts Museum (hereinafter referred to as the 'Museum'), and it shall be under the supervision and control of the Regents and the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution."

(c) Section 3 of such joint resolution is further amended by adding at the end thereof the following new subsection:

"(d) There are hereby authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary, in addition to the funds received under subsection (a) of this section, to carry out the purposes of this joint resolution."

SEC. 3. Section 5 of such joint resolution is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 5. All agencies of the Government are authorized to donate to the Museum any works of art now or hereafter under their control."

SEC. 4. Sections 4 (a), 6, 7, and 8 of such joint resolution are amended by striking out "Gallery" wherever it appears and inserting in lieu thereof "Museum".

84TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4307

A BILL

To amend the joint resolution of May 17, 1938, to provide for the construction and maintenance of a National Collection of Fine Arts Museum on the site set aside for an art gallery thereunder, and for other purposes.

By Mr. THOMPSON of New Jersey

FEBRUARY 23, 1955
Referred to the Committee on Public Works

10 October 1955

Dear Congressman Thompson:

During the meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts on 6 October 1955, I read your letter of 21 September 1955 regarding H. R. 4307, a bill "To amend the joint resolution of May 17, 1938, to provide for the construction and maintenance of a National Collection of Fine Arts Museum on the site set aside for an art gallery thereunder, and for other purposes."

In discussing your letter we reviewed the report on H. R. 4307, dated 21 March 1955, which we submitted to the House Committee on Public Works. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Commission reaffirmed their views regarding the site and administration of the proposed cultural center that were incorporated in the report and asked me to forward a copy of it for your information.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

David E. Finley
Chairman

Honorable Frank Thompson, Jr.
452 Old House Office Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Enclosure

COPY

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
7000 INTERIOR DEPARTMENT BUILDING
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

21 March 1955

Honorable Charles A. Buckley, Chairman
Committee on Public Works
1304 New House Office Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Congressman Buckley:

The Commission of Fine Arts considered H. R. 4307, a bill "to amend the joint resolution of May 17, 1938, to provide for the construction and maintenance of a National Collection of Fine Arts Museum on the site set aside for an art gallery thereunder, and for other purposes," at a meeting on 15 March 1955.

Two facts emerged from the discussion that influenced the Commission's decision not to endorse enactment of the legislation proposed in H. R. 4307: first, the site is not large enough to accommodate a structure or structures that will satisfy the Smithsonian's needs for a museum, and also fulfill the space requirement of the proposed auditoria and auxiliary services such as parking; and second, the addition of a cultural center to the responsibilities of the Smithsonian Institution would seriously alter its fundamental purpose and organizational structure.

The Commission hopes that the Congress will authorize legislation establishing a commission to study the problems involved in the site and component structures of a cultural center for Washington as is contemplated by H. R. 1825 and H. R. 4215-84th Congress and their fourteen or so companion bills. Until such a commission can report, the choice of a site and the assignment of administrative responsibility is believed to be premature.

The Bureau of the Budget has advised that there is no objection to the submission of this report to your Committee

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

David E. Finley
Chairman